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BRASS FURNITURE.

WHILST brass has, at all times, been employed for artistic purposes, it has been subject in this respect to the laws of fashion, being resorted to at one period more than another. From the medieval age it has been continually patronized, however, for ecclesiastical furniture, and its accessories, as in altar frontals, lecterns, pedestals of fonts, and symbolic devices. The present tendency of decorative art towards rich and attractive colors in material and in surface tints, and the freedom imparted to design, owing to the breaking up of former set styles, with the prevailing taste for the most cheerful possible aspect to interiors, and an improving standard of elegance and refinement, have led to a greater prominence than formerly was given to the use of brass in furniture.

In cabinet work, builders' hardware and the ornaments that pertain to a well-furnished room, this metal has a well-defined sphere of employment. Considerable originality with much good taste, is shown in the designs of the brass furniture brought out. Resort to fire-gilt gilding

wanting in the ancient wrought work for this purpose. It suits well such articles as coal and firewood boxes, of which some fine old examples are to be met, also for fire and stove screens. Owing to the thinness of stamped metal it is unsuitable for fenders; in fenders preference should be given to perforated designs of naturalistic forms conventionalized, or to mounted bars with standards.

Some admirable brass fire-gilt mantels, broad and lofty, and constituting imposing mural decorations, are finding their place in city mansions. Other metal than brass, particularly hammered copper and oxydized silver, are frequently introduced in these for contrast and giving depth to the designs with other scenic effects, whilst painted tiles in brass panels, in diapered and other forms, line the several recesses.

Steel is well combined with brass both in fenders and fire and dog irons. One use to which raised brass work is well applied is for lining the backs of open fire places, the design being commonly small diapered forms with central figures, or tiles sunk in panels. The rough filing of the surface off so as to give it a surface of rough and irregular sparkling grains for a coating, set off

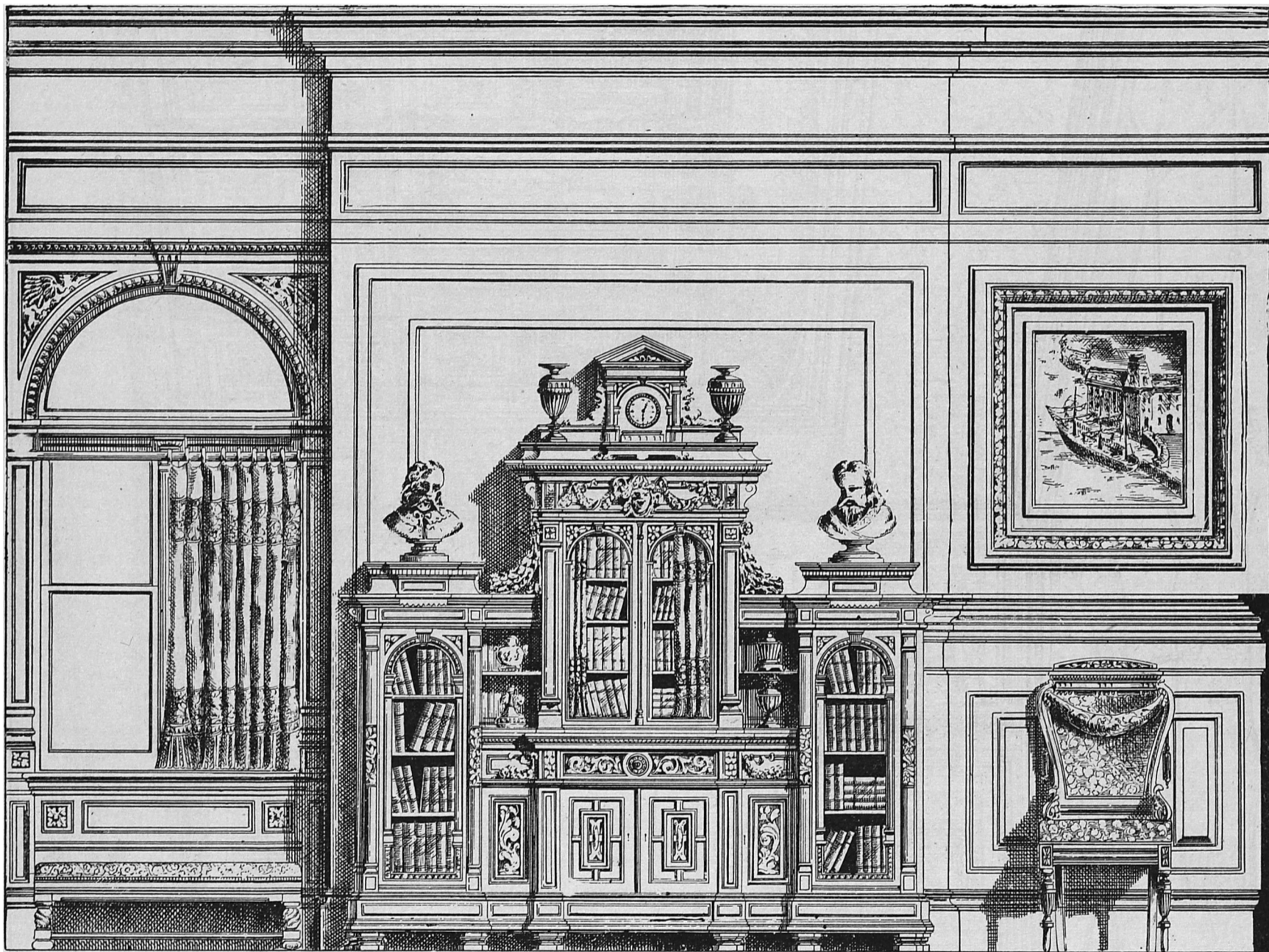
which bronze admits in its shadings. Ancient figures in brass circling round the base of richly chased plaques show that the material was thought worthy of the highest skill in treatment. Interior decorators have put to good account for newels, stair standards, and balustrades, fire-gilt brass, cast and rolled, the dead and burnished gilt surfaces being at times further varied with oxydized silver and iridescent bronze.

Hand rails and fretwork and scroll ornamentation, set off by the elegant floriations of Gothic standards, have a strong, bold, and imposing appearance.

The adaptation of brass to geometric forms is well illustrated in giving a circular back to a chair with triangular seat. With all its oddity it will be pleasing. In this case deep crimson leather as a covering, edged with heavy gilt-headed nails, aids the effect.

CARVED MAHOGANY BEDSTEAD..

THE bedstead illustrated on page 137, presents a specimen of thoughtful and elaborate decoration which has not, perhaps, been surpassed by any similar article of furniture yet produced in this



DESIGN FOR BOOK CASE. BY WILLIAM FROHNE.

prevents all liability to tarnish, and this gilding, through the variation in hues that can be imparted to the surface, multiplies artistic effects, whether used separately or in combination. The surface of brass takes satin finish, dead lustre, brown bronze, and oxydized silver. Tiles and enamels in delicately tinted designs associate admirably with brass in furniture and general decorative work, so also dark woods. A quality decidedly favoring brass is that its beauty is enhanced by artificial light.

There is no question that in dealing with this metal, American art exhibits higher taste in furniture than in the greater proportion of that turned out in England. As a rule it is simple, and, if apparently less ornate, is more satisfactory. The elaborate ornament at low cost in the abounding English work is due to the employment of sheet metal stamped in imitation of wrought work, the molds ensuring often an undesirable amount of uniformity.

The pieces of stamped in sheet metal entirely composing an article are riveted together. Stamped is used for picture frames, but is always

with burnished edges or terminals, was a favorite mode of decoration under the first French empire, particularly for chandeliers of the corona style, in the way of massive pendants.

In leading articles of furniture brass lends itself admirably to geometric forms, especially to straight lines, or to such combinations of these as the Greek fret, and to curves in segments of circles. The flat frame of a mirror in fire-gilt brass may properly terminate at sides with a scroll-shaped form.

Brass frames of beveled edged mirrors admit of many styles of enrichment; brass candelabra attached to these, and treated conventionally, have a handsome effect. Ebony and old Honduras mahogany are the choicest woods for combination with brass, as affording rich contrasts. Separate tones of enrichment may be given to light brass stands, by making the top shelf of one or other of those woods the centre, a tile set in lighter wood, and the lower shelf a plaque of embossed steel in electric blue.

Brass is not without decided merit for vases and figures, and can dispense with the chiaroscuro

country. The central panels of the head-board and foot show four and a half inches of relief. The flight of the returning swallows is full of life and animation. The delicate streaks of cloud, the young moon, and the birds in the far distance, are managed with great feeling and skill. The bush of snowballs, and the suggestive palmettos on the footboard are cut with equal spirit and intelligence. The heads on the side panels, painted in oil, on a disc of gold, are representative of night and morning. White azaleas on the latter, and the balloon vine on the former, are the floral decorations, and are both drawn as graceful trailing vines.

The construction of this bedstead may be taken as an illustrative specimen of the methods of design carried out in the practical art department of the Cincinnati School of Design. While we may not copy, we may profit by the part and draw inspiration from its teachings. This example shows features which may be referred to both the classic and Gothic lines of construction and forms, yet presents an example of decorative art distinctively American.



CARVED BEDSTEAD, FROM CINCINNATI SCHOOL OF DESIGN. (See page 136.)